

AFTER HOURS ADVICE and TELEMEDICINE

What do I do if I need advice when the office is closed?

You have two options if you need advice outside our regular business hours.

Option #1: Utilize the nurse advice line offered by your insurance company. Most, if not all, insurance companies offer their own free advice line to their subscribers. It's worth mentioning that this option is not pediatric-specific. The number can typically be found on your insurance card or their website. Some insurance companies send us records of calls made by our patients, but not all of them. So, if you call their advice line and need to follow up with us further, please let our staff know so we can look into getting a copy of the call.

Option #2: You can still call our main office number 509.448.PEDS(7337) and select the prompt to be connected to the after-hours triage service. This will redirect you to Triage4Pediatrics, where you will leave a message for experienced pediatric Registered Nurses who will return your call within 30-60 minutes. They will collect some demographic information and other pertinent information regarding your needs and advise you on "what to do." They will contact Dr. Lee, Dr. Thompson, or Dr. Carlson if necessary.

This service automatically sends us a record of each call they receive regarding one of our patients. So we know when, why, and what advice they provided. Triage4Pediatrics only provides urgent triage service (advice) for us. They cannot access our EMR and your child's medical record. They will not, for example, be able to complete a sports physical form for you or look at their immunizations.

If you choose option #2, in most cases, your portion of the expense will be \$15* per call. We will cover the rest of the call cost and other fees that Triage4Pediatrics charges. We will generate a statement and note "triage call" as the reason. It may be included on a statement for other services rendered in the office. *Effective January 1, 2023, Triage4Pediatrics charges an additional \$4 if multiple attempts are made to reach the caller. Please be sure to answer their call, even if you no longer need their service, to avoid the additional \$4 being passed on to you.

Telemedicine

Several years ago, telephone and other electronic device service codes were added to the **Current Procedural Terminology** (CPT) book. We utilize CPT codes to report medical, surgical, and diagnostic procedures and services to health insurance companies.

There are specific guidelines around when these codes are allowed to be billed, and we will be following those. However, just like an office visit, some patient responsibility may be associated with billing for these services. Many insurance companies have a benefit in their policies for Telemedicine. Some even offer their own telemedicine services.

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So, what kinds of things would fall under Telemedicine?

Topics that could be handled without coming into the office (at the discretion of the provider) are:

- Skin disorders
- Behavioral/Mental health follow-ups
- Consultations regarding specialty referrals
- Asthma management
- Allergies and anaphylaxis: medication review and refills with a review of specialist or emergency room visits
- Discussion of lab/imagining/test results
- Nutrition and obesity guidance

The cost of telemedicine interactions will vary from one insurance plan to the next. We recommend looking at your insurance plan's specific coverage regarding telemedicine services.

Why am I being charged for these services?

We understand that insurance premiums are high, out-of-pocket costs are high, and what insurance companies cover seems to be shrinking. We can sympathize. Our goal is to remain an independent pediatric practice/business that provides quality and compassionate care. And unlike other industries, we can't just "raise our prices" when our costs increase. Insurance companies and the government dictate how we are compensated for our services. We truly appreciate you entrusting us to care for your child(ren) as we strive to provide the most value to you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thompson, Dr. Lee, and Dr. Carlson

